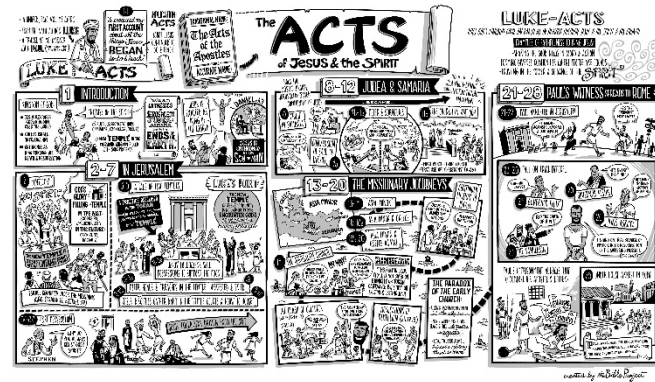




The Congregation at Prayer
The Whole Story

2025

A Daily Devotional
St. Paul LCMS, Ida Grove, IA



Week #18-The Whole Story
Second Week of Easter
April 27-May 4, 2025

Start Every Day

"In the Name of the Father, and + of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen"

recite **APOSTLE'S CREED**

Read **Catechism—The Tenth Commandment**

You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not entice or force away our neighbor's wife, workers, or animals, or turn them against him, but urge them to stay and do their duty.

VERSE: Matthew 26:26-28 ***“Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples and said, ‘Take, eat; this is my body.’ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them saying, ‘Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.’”***

PRAYER of the WORD

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, without Your help our labor is useless, and without Your light our search is in vain. Invigorate our study of Your holy Word that, by due diligence and right discernment, we may establish ourselves and others in Your holy faith; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Sunday, April 27

- Read **Psalm 113** (Hallelujah! Praise, O servants of the LORD)
- Read **The Acts of the Apostles, Ch. 13-14**

SEVERUS OF ANTIOCH: (Acts 13:30) Do not be troubled by the fact that Jesus is said to have been raised by God. Indeed, if Jesus is none other than the incarnate Word, he is also the power of the Father through whom everything occurs. This is according

He lives, He lives, who once was dead;
He lives, my ever-living head.

- 2 He lives triumphant from the grave;
He lives eternally to save;
He lives all-glorious in the sky;
He lives exalted there on high.
- 3 He lives to bless me with His love;
He lives to plead for me above;
He lives my hungry soul to feed;
He lives to help in time of need.
- 4 He lives to grant me rich supply;
He lives to guide me with His eye;
He lives to comfort me when faint;
He lives to hear my soul's complaint.
- 5 He lives to silence all my fears;
He lives to wipe away my tears;
He lives to calm my troubled heart;
He lives all blessings to impart.
- 6 He lives, my kind, wise, heav'nly friend;
He lives and loves me to the end;
He lives, and while He lives, I'll sing;
He lives, my Prophet, Priest, and King.
- 7 He lives and grants me daily breath;
He lives, and I shall conquer death;
He lives my mansion to prepare;
He lives to bring me safely there.
- 8 He lives, all glory to His name!
He lives, my Jesus, still the same;
Oh, the sweet joy this sentence gives:
I know that my Redeemer lives!

Text: Samuel Medley, 1738–99, abr.
Text: Public domain

Almighty God, grant that we who have celebrated the Lord's resurrection may by Your grace confess in our life and conversation that Jesus is Lord and God; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Personal Prayers

pray **LORD'S PRAYER**

Luther's Morning Prayer

I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

Luther's Evening Prayer

I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have graciously kept me this day; and I pray that You would forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

461 I KNOW THAT MY REDEEMER LIVES

1 I know that my Redeemer lives;
What comfort this sweet sentence gives!

to the words, "Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God." He himself will be considered to have raised himself while he is also said to have been raised by the Father to whom all things are referred as the eternal source and cause. Christ himself, in fact, says,⁷ "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." CATENA ON THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 13.30–31.¹

Monday, April 28

- Read **Psalm 114** (Tremble at the Presence of the Lord)
- Read ***Acts of the Apostles, Ch. 15-16***

AUGUSTINE: (Acts 15:9) Faith in God purifies the heart, the pure heart sees God. But faith is sometimes defined as followed by people who wish to deceive themselves; as if it were enough merely to believe—some people, you see, promise themselves the vision of God and the kingdom of heaven for believing while living bad lives. Against these the apostle James indignantly took umbrage out of spiritual charity, so he says in his letter, "You believe that God is one." You pat yourself on your back for your faith; you observe that many godless people assume there are many gods, and you congratulate yourself for believing that there is only one God. "You do well. The demons also believe—

¹ Martin, Francis, and Evan Smith, eds. 2006. [Acts](#). Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

and shudder.” Shall they too see God? Those who are pure of heart shall see him. Whoever would say that the unclean spirits are pure of heart? And yet, “they believe—and shudder.”

So our faith must be distinguished from the faith of demons. Our faith, you see, purifies the heart, their faith makes them guilty.... So let us distinguish our faith and see that believing is not enough. That is not the sort of faith that purifies the heart. “Purifying their hearts,” it says, “by faith.” But which faith, what sort of faith? The one, surely, which the apostle Paul defines when he says “faith that works through love.” This faith is different from the faith of demons, different from the morals of dissolute and desperate people. “Faith,” he says. “Which faith?” The one “that works through love,” hopes for what God promises. You could not have a more perfect, a more carefully thought-out definition than that. SERMON 53.10–11.²

Tuesday, April 29

- Read **Psalm 115** (Not to us, O YHWH, but your name give glory)
- Read **Acts of the Apostles, Ch. 17-18**

CHRYSOSTOM: (Acts 17:22) Paul found an altar, on which the words “to an unknown god” were engraved: who was that unknown god but Christ?

² Martin, Francis, and Evan Smith, eds. 2006. [Acts](#). Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Father the soul hastens to hear his words, and having heard them, it finds them sweeter than all things. Let the prophet who has tasted this sweetness teach you, when he says, “How sweet are your words to my lips, above honeycomb to my mouth.” What else can a soul desire when it has once tasted the sweetness of the Word, when it has once seen its brightness? When Moses remained on the mountain forty days to receive the law, he had no need of food for the body. Elijah, resting [under a broom tree], asked that his life be taken away from him.³³ Even Peter, foreseeing on the mountain the glory of the Lord’s resurrection, did not wish to come down and said, “Lord, it is good for us to be here.” How great is the glory of that divine Essence, how great the graces of the Word at which even angels wish to gaze! LETTER 79.⁷

Sunday, May 4

- Read **Psalm 120** (In my distress I called to YHWH, and he answered me.)
- Read **Acts of the Apostles, Ch. 25-26**

End Every Day

Pray the *Collect for Second Sunday of Easter*

⁷ Wesselschmidt, Quentin F., ed. 2007. [Psalms 51–150](#). Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture OT 8. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Friday, May 2

- Read **Psalm 118** (O give thanks to YHWH, for he is good)
- Read **Acts of the Apostles, Ch. 23-24**

CHRYSOSTOM: (Acts 23:11) Notice how great is the consolation! First he praises him, “as you have testified about me at Jerusalem”; then, he does not leave him fearful of the uncertainty of his journey to Rome. For not only will you arrive there, he says, but you will also make use of this boldness of speech. From this it is revealed that not only will he be saved but that he will be saved in the great city, honored with great crowns. Why didn’t [Jesus] appear to him before he fell into danger? Because, as always, it is in afflictions that God consoles. For then he appears more desirable, as he trains us even in the midst of dangers. HOMILIES ON THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 49.⁶

Saturday, May 3

- Read **Psalm 119** (Blessed are those who walk in the law of YHWH!)

AMBROSE: (Psalm 119:103) The soul presses forward for a glimpse of hidden mysteries, to the very abode of the Word, to the very dwelling place of that highest Good, and his light and brightness. In that bosom and secret dwelling place of the

⁶ Martin, Francis, and Evan Smith, eds. 2006. [Acts](#). Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Do you see the wisdom in changing the name? Do you see the reason he released the inscription from captivity?... To save and benefit them. What else? Perhaps one might say that the Athenians wrote these words for Christ?... They certainly wrote that with a different meaning, but he was, nevertheless, able to change it.... Why did they write it? They had many gods, or rather many demons, “All the gods of the Gentiles are demons,” and some of them were native, others were foreign.... They had received some of their gods from their fathers, others from the neighboring nations, such as the Scythians, the Thracians and the Egyptians.... What did they do then? They erected an altar and inscribed it with the words “to an unknown god” in order to signify through the inscription: If by any chance there is another god who is still unknown to us, we will worship him too. See their immoderate superstition! For this reason Paul said from the beginning, “I see how extremely religious you are in every way ... you not only worship the gods who are known to you, but also those who are still unknown to you.” Therefore they had written, “To an unknown god.” ... The unknown God is none other than Christ. CATENA ON THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 17.23.³

Wednesday, April 30

³ Martin, Francis, and Evan Smith, eds. 2006. [Acts](#). Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

- Read **Psalm 116** (I love YHWH, because he has heard my voice and my pleas for mercy.)
- Read **Acts of the Apostles, Ch. 19-20**

CHRYSOSTOM: (Acts 20:26) [Paul] is about to say something more burdensome, that is, “I am innocent of the blood of all of you.” With this he prepares them and shows that nothing is lacking. Since he was about to place upon them the entire burden with all its weight, he first appeases their feelings by saying, “And now, behold, I know that you will see my face no more.” He then adds, “I am innocent of the blood of all of you.” The pain is twofold: one, to see his face no more; two, that this applies to all of them. For he says, “All you among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom will see my face no more.” Therefore it is natural that “I testify to you,” since I will no longer be here, “that I am innocent of the blood of all of you, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.” Do you see how he frightens them and crushes their souls, troubled and afflicted as they are? But this was necessary. “For I did not shrink,” he says, “from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.” So it is he who does not speak who is responsible for the blood, that is, for the murder. Nothing could be more terrifying than this. He shows that they too, if they do not act, are responsible for the blood. So although he seems to be justifying his own actions, he is, in fact, putting

fear into them. HOMILIES ON THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 44.⁴

Thursday, May 1

- Read **Psalm 117** (Hallelujah, all nations! Extol him, all peoples!)
- Read **Acts of the Apostles, Ch. 21-22**

BEDE: (Acts 21:11) Agabus is imitating the ancient prophets who were accustomed to say, “The Lord God says this,” because the Holy Spirit is Lord and God in the same way as the Father and the Son are, and it is impossible to separate the operation of those whose nature and will are one. Hence too we read above, “The Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work for which I have called them,’ ” namely, the office of apostle. And Paul himself writes, “Paul, an apostle, sent not from people or by people but by Jesus Christ and God the Father.”¹⁰ We have said these things so that no one might believe, following Macedonius, that the Holy Spirit is a creature or of less authority than the Father or the Son. COMMENTARY ON THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 21.11.⁵

⁴ Martin, Francis, and Evan Smith, eds. 2006. [Acts](#). Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

⁵ Martin, Francis, and Evan Smith, eds. 2006. [Acts](#). Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.